



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

Region 1 Address: 2315 North Discovery Place, Spokane WA , (509) 892-1001, TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office Location: Between Evergreen and Pines off Mirabeau Parkway

October 29, 2021

Joshua White, District Ranger
Three Rivers Ranger District
Colville National Forest
255 W. 11th Avenue
Kettle Falls, WA 99141

Re: Stimson Land Exchange Scoping Comments

Dear Ms. Hutchinson,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide initial comments on the potential land exchange between the Colville National Forest (CNF) and Stimson Lumber Company (SLC). The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) appreciates the opportunity to help focus the effort to identify potentially significant effects that will be evaluated during the environmental analysis. The department values the excellent working relationship that exists between WDFW and CNF and looks forward to continuing to work together on resource management plans in the future.

WDFW recognizes that the consolidation of the checkerboard pattern of SLC and CNF land would provide an opportunity for better management of resources within this critical habitat in northern Pend Oreille County. The 60,000 acres currently owned by SLC is heavily weighted with critical habitats and key watersheds that are pivotal for the conservation of threatened species, including grizzly bear, bull trout and Canada lynx. In the opinion of WDFW, the land exchange lends itself well to native fish and wildlife management, as that is where the bulk of sensitive species are and where much of the work focused on native species is occurring.

There are, however, some initial points that came to light during the preliminary review of this land swap. We request that these be addressed during the environmental analysis:

- There is a need for a road management plan for the approximately 380 miles of forest service roads currently funded by cost-sharing with SLC.
- Game Management Unit (GMU) 117 is one of, if not the, most popular GMUs in Northeast Washington for recreationists, including hunters. Access to a big parcel of land in GMU 117 could be lost due to ownership now being privately held by SLC.
- A large portion of the proposed acreage is habitat to many sensitive species, if CNF were to allow grazing within this area, conservation and restoration efforts may be negatively impacted without the proper mitigation measure in place.

Again, WDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment. We look forward to collaborating on the topics included in this letter and offer our assistance in completing a successful environmental analysis. Should you have any questions, our point of contact for this project is Renee Kinnick. Please don't hesitate to reach out to her at (509) 309-1764 or Renee.Kinnick@dfw.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Wachtel', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Mark Wachtel
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Habitat Program Manager
Eastern Region, Region 1

cc: Steve Pozzanghera, Regional Director, WDFW
Ray Entz, Kalispell Natural Resources Department
Amanda Parrish, The Lands Council